

# **VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes, January 28, 2010**

**Approved: 02/11/10**

**Present:** Tim Bowman, Sara Masucci, Sara Oaklander, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon  
**Absent:** Kevin Heine, Bruce MacDonald  
**Guests:** Roger Colton, Kevin Cunningham

### **1. Meeting Convened at 7:08pm**

### **2. Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the January 14, 2010 meeting were approved unanimously with amendments. Paul will see that they are amended and posted.

Amendment: Change made regarding what sections of website are being worked on by Jennifer Page and Paul Solomon

### **3. Update on Town Website**

No significant progress from last meeting. Jennifer handed out a list of potential links for the Get Involved! section. Discussion included comments about:

- Should there be text about what a Representative Town Meeting is?
- Should we link to MA page
  - Not necessary
  - Link to Brownsberger and Tolman
- When listing “citizens groups” need to be clear that list is not exhaustive
  - Potentially use Meet Belmont participant list as a source for links
- Question raised about purpose of our participation in website development
  - Are we adding something new or filling a gap?
    - If we are filling a gap, is that an issue that should be addressed?
  - We are limited because town IT dept. is very small and over extended
  - Some of Newcomers info is new content, while some pieces do fill holes
  - We need to be careful of where we choose to put our focus due to infrastructure constraints

A brief discussion occurred about the expectations some Town officials have for the initiative. It will be important for us to communicate with Town leaders about the scope of our plan and the level of engagement we will need from the leadership.

### **4. Budget and Taxes Initiative Update**

Tim Bowman briefly reported on current status of initiative

- Shift to long-term focus
- Tentative plan to hold community forum in May
  - Working on locating a facilitator
  - Tim and Paul will meet with Entwistle to gain insights about his Community Dialogue

- Meeting scheduled with David Layzer (Northeastern faculty and Belmont resident) to discuss his work on deliberative democracy and networked governance
- Will need to meet with Town officials to brief them on status
- Roger Colton's BelmontBudget.org will be great resource for our project

Sara Masucci briefly reported on plan to engage citizens in process of thinking and sharing their reasons for living in Belmont. The proposal is to have a recurring column in the Citizen Herald in which people will respond to the prompt, "Describe a positive experience that has made you appreciate living in Belmont". Submissions would be solicited from members of many different groups in Town, and we will also encourage readers to submit columns. The purpose is to engage citizens in thinking about what they value in the community as a way to begin the process of thinking about how we fund those values and programs.

Discussion included comments about:

- Should it only be open to residents?
- Concern about low readership of paper
  - Perhaps good opportunity to increase readership
- Want to make sure that people write about more than just services
- How to broaden dissemination
  - Link to Town website, other websites

## **5. BelmontBudet.org presentation by Roger Colton**

Roger Colton has developed a website, BelmontBudget.org (BBO), to help engage the citizenry in understanding and possibly influencing the town budget process. The website has three main purposes:

- Inform the public
- Allow the public to give feedback
- Let the infrastructure of the government respond to feedback

The goal is to create an "electronic conversation" that will give people a way to be part of the process. The site will act as a go between to get people's suggestions to officials. Ideally people will be able to pose questions in advance of Town Meeting as opposed to on the floor.

Hopefully the site will go "live" on 2/8. Roger will be sending letters to hundreds of active Belmont residents to announce the site.

The website will have pages that provide links to detailed budget information, links to Belmont Media Center to view meetings, an input page to submit comments, an answer page, and a page for town officials to post insights. A suggestion was made to add a "News/ Announcements" section to the homepage.

BBO is not an advocacy group and will not be answering questions, only forwarding to appropriate officials. This raises issue of official's degree of involvement.

There was discussion regarding the “inquiry” page about privacy. Concerns raised included:

- How will anonymity be explained?
  - Should there be a privacy statement on site?
    - Yes
  - Suggestion that there be a reminder statement about anonymity “to the degree possible” adjacent to the box where comments would be submitted
- Since comments are forwarded to officials “as is” should it be made clear that identifying comments will be included?

Amount of use of site will influence how material is used. Roger may bundle comments/questions to create occasional column for Belmont Citizen-Herald.

This website will be an excellent resource for VIC’s initiative on budget.

## **6. Sustainable Belmont**

John McAlpin will be stepping up as Chair on 2/1/10. John Kolterman will assume role of Vice Chair. A motion was made to approve Kolterman as Vice Chair of Sustainable Belmont and passed unanimously.

Sustainable Belmont’s next meeting is W, 2/3 in the Assembly room. They will report to VIC on Th, 2/25 in the Flett Room.

## **7. MLK Breakfast**

VIC was sponsor. While there was heavy snow which reduced attendance, the event was a success and the speaker very powerful.

## **8. Next Meeting**

Thursday, February 11, 2010  
Flett Room

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Sara Masucci*